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MANDATORY SAFETY AUDITS OF SCHOOLS, MENTAL HEALTH HELP

The Ministry of Education on Saturday issued a fiat to all states and UTs to take urgent steps to ensure the safety and well-being of students

'REPORT ANY THREAT TO KIDS WITHIN A DAY'

Mandatory safety audits of schools and child-related facilities as per national safety codes, providing psychosocial support through counselling and reporting any dangerous incident involving children within 24 hours to designated authorities are among the measures proposed. All schools used by children must undergo safety audits via national safety codes | P9

COORDINATION FROM PARENTS SOUGHT

- The order also mandated training for staff and students to tackle emergencies, including evacuation drills, first aid and safety protocol
- The order called upon education departments, school boards and affiliated authorities to act without any delay in implementing the measures, through the help of parents, guardians and local bodies

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STUDENTS WERE KILLED AT A SCHOOL IN RAJASTHAN, LEADING TO THE FIAT

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

IN STEP

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Army Vice Chief Lt General N S Raja Subramani, Navy Chief Adm Dinesh K Tripathi and Air Chief Marshal A P Singh as they march to pay tributes to the Kargil War martyrs at the National War Memorial (L) on the Kargil Vijay Diwas anniversary, in New Delhi. (Right) Veterans offer floral tributes to the Veeragallu that was inaugurated in honour of Kargil War martyrs in Bengaluru on Saturday | PTI & SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

SIT begins probe in Dharmasthala mass burial case

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT) began its investigation into the Dharmasthala mass burial case, and the whistleblower, who is also the witness-complainant in the case, recorded his statement before investigating officer Jitendra Kumar Dayama on Saturday.

The SIT has set up office at the PWD Inspection Bungalow (IB) at Mallikatte in Kadri in Mangaluru.

On Friday, SIT officials DIG MN Anucheth and Dayama arrived in Mangaluru and officially took over the case files from the Dakshina Kannada police. After formal procedures, they collected preliminary information in the case. On Friday night, Dayama visited the Dharmasthala police station and collected additional information. "We have taken over the case and started the investigation," an official, part of the SIT, said.

Sources said that the advocates representing the witness-complainant were issued notices on Friday to appear before the SIT to record his statement. On Saturday, the whistleblower arrived at the SIT office with his advocates around 11 am and recorded his statement till evening. A senior police officer, part of the SIT, said that another office will be established at Belthangady, while a helpline too will be set up.

The complainant, who was a sanitation worker, had filed a complaint with the Dakshina Kannada SP and Dharmasthala police station, alleging that he was threatened into burying bodies of persons who were victims of rape and murder in Dharmasthala village and surrounding areas.

A case was registered at the Dharmasthala police station on July 4. The state government constituted the SIT on July 19 and it is headed by Pranav Mohanty, DIG, Internal Security Division, with DIG (Recruitment) MN Anucheth, DCP of the CAR headquarters Soumyalatha and SP Jitendra Kumar Dayama as members. The decision to form the SIT came after Karnataka State Women's Commission Chairperson Nagalakshmi Choudhary wrote a letter to the state government.

Witness complainant arrives at PWD IB at Mallikatte along with advocates

EXPRESS READ

Asia Cup: India to play Pakistan on Sept 14

CHENNAI: The much-anticipated men's Asia Cup schedule was announced on Saturday with India and Pakistan slotted in same group. They will play each other on September 14 in the tournament that is being held in the United Arab Emirates from September 9-28. The Board of Control for Cricket in India is the host, but the tournament will be held in a neutral venue | P15

Thailand, Cambodia exchange fresh fire

SURIN (THAILAND): Thailand and Cambodia traded accusations of fresh attacks on Saturday as deadly border clashes entered a third day and international pressure mounted for a ceasefire. The fighting has killed at least 33 people and displaced more than 1,68,000. Artillery and small arms fire were reported near several border villages.

2 thieves target 5 stores on Lavelle Rd, close to DCP's office

PRAVEEN KUMAR @ Bengaluru

TWO thieves have had a field day, stealing cash and valuables from five neighbouring shops on the upmarket Lavelle Road, which is close to the office of the Central division's Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP).

They have struck between 3.30 am and 5.30 am on Thursday. CCTV footage from all the shops shows the same two accused involved in all the five thefts at IRIS Aroma Boutique, Louis Philippe showroom, Jean-Claude Biguine Salon & Spa, Hakim's Aalim salon and Nykaa Luxe cosmetics stores. The managers from all the stores filed complaints at the Cubbon Park police station on Thursday.

Of the five stores, IRIS Aroma Boutique, Louis Philippe showroom and Nykaa Luxe store have glass doors and the thieves have entered them by breaking open the glass door locks. The other two stores had shutter doors, and the accused have broken open the locks. J Intiyaz, manager of IRIS Aroma Boutique, Mallikarjun, manager of Louis Philippe showroom, BP Puneeth, area manager of Jean-Claude Biguine Salon & Spa, Rijesh, manager of Hakim's Aalim salon, and Daniel, store manager of Nykaa Luxe cosmetics stores, have filed police complaints. P5

No timeline for completion of negotiations on bilateral trade deal

Trade talks with US making fast progress: Goyal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

TALKS on the India-US trade deal is progressing fast, Minister of Commerce and Industries Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. Negotiations are at an advanced stage with Oman as well, while with the European Union and US, they are making fast progress, he said.

Goyal, however, refused to give any timeline for the completion of the US deal even as the extended deadline (August 1) for imposition of the reciprocal tariff is less than a week away. According to commerce ministry sources, a delegation of US negotiators is likely to come to India in the second half of August for talks on the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). India faces a 26% reciprocal tariff if there is no trade deal by August 1.

Goyal said that the India-UK trade agreement serves as a doorway for India to engage with the developed world. He said that unlike past FTAs under the UPA government, which were often signed with direct competitors like ASEAN nations, the Modi government has focused on FTAs with complementary economies like Mauritius, Australia, UAE, and the EFTA bloc (Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland).

"The business opportunities, the quality and cost competitiveness of Indian goods and services, the demographic dividend of our young and aspirational population, the rule of law, and the strength of our democracy all make India a preferred global partner," he said.

In future, when Kolhapuri sandals are exported, India will get credit. It will be exported as India's GI product

—Piyush Goyal, minister

Major pushback against Trump's GM playbook

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

INDIA is firm on its stance against importing genetically modified (GM) crops from the US, sources in the government said. It has been our stated position for long and it remains so, said a top government source. Import of GM crops has been a bone of contention between the two countries during the trade negotiations. With the government now making its stance clear, the Trump playbook will find full resistance on GM crops.

The US is pressing India to allow imports of GM crops such as soybean meal and distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS) for animal feed. Initially, the India did not strongly oppose the idea of some tariff cuts on farm goods or even selective GM imports. However, after facing strong domestic resistance, India seems to have hardened its position as far as GM imports are concerned.

A Niti Aayog report had suggested a "strategic opening for US imports" for broader export gains. It proposed importing GM soybean seeds, crushing them at coastal facilities, selling oil domestically and exporting soymeal (with GM traits) to avoid domestic contamination. But experts panned it citing weak regulatory oversight.

Another major area of difference between the two countries is imports of animals fed on animal-derived feed — for example, butter from cows fed meat — due to deep religious sensitivities. India prohibits such animals and it considers this policy non-negotiable.

ADR rejoinder rebuts EC's claim that it has right to verify citizenship in Bihar

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

RESPONDING to the Election Commission's counter affidavit filed on July 21, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) on Saturday told the Supreme Court that the EC's electoral roll verification goes against the SC's past judgments, and was a "grave fraud" on voters.

The ADR's rejoinder came after the ECI had on July 21 submitted its reply defending the Bihar SIR (Special Intensive Revision) exercise and said it was done to restore public confidence and integrity of electoral rolls.

The court will hear pleas challenging SIR on Monday.

The ADR also questioned the refusal by the Election Commission to accept Aadhaar, Voter ID and ration card as valid "standalone" proof for inclusion in the electoral roll during the SIR, ad described it as "patently absurd". It submitted that the ECI has given no valid reason for its decision.

On July 10, a bench of justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Joymalya Bagchi, while refusing to stay SIR, asked the EC to consider Aadhaar, Voter ID, and ration card for the exercise. But the EC argued that Aadhaar, voter cards and ration cards could easily be faked. The ADR said any of the 11 documents for SIR were equally prone to fraud. "SIR is being conducted in a manner that constitutes a grave fraud on the voters of Bihar," the ADR said.

It also alleged glaring discrepancies in SIR. "Media reports suggest how enumeration forms are being filled in the absence of voters," the ADR said.

Odisha prepares to undertake SIR

Amid the row over the special intensive revision (SIR) of voter rolls in Bihar, the Odisha government is gearing up to undertake the exercise soon. It will be conducted after a gap of over two decades | P5

Bihar horror: Chirag raps CM on ambulance rape

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

A 26-year-old woman with a dream to don the khaki appeared at a physical test for recruitment of Home Guards in Bihar's Gaya but was allegedly gangraped in an ambulance after she fainted during the test on Thursday.

The horrific incident drew widespread outrage as cracks appeared in the ruling NDA in Bihar when Union minister Chirag Paswan expressed "regret" over having to support the Nitish government, which he said had "surrendered" before criminals.

The young woman, a resident of Imamganj in Gaya, narrated her ordeal to hospital authorities after regaining consciousness. Hospital authorities, in turn, informed police, following which an FIR was registered. Gaya SSP Anand Kumar said two accused, Vinay Kumar (driver) and Ajit Kumar (technician), have already been arrested and produced in court, which remanded them in 14-day judicial custody.

The victim, in her statement, said she was gangraped by three-four individuals travelling in the ambulance arranged to transport her from the BMP-3 ground to the Magadh Medical College and Hospital. "Though I was in semi-conscious state, I felt the pain in my ... abdomen," she said.

Chirag's remarks came two days after he heaped praise on Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor for playing an 'honest' role in Bihar politics. Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav asked voters to vote the NDA out. "Bihar is under the rule of demons," Yadav said.

INHUMAN ACT

Uncared for? Man kills 2 nephews, injures third

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a heart-wrenching incident, a 25-year-old man allegedly killed his brother's two sons -- aged six and nine years, and also attacked the third son, who is in a critical condition.

The accused, **Khaseem** (25), a daily wage labourer, has been arrested. His brother, Chand Pasha, his wife Rehana, mother, and three sons, stay at Kammasandra. The family, which hails from Yadgir, has been living in the city for the last five years. Pasha works as a construction labourer, while his wife is a garment factory worker.

The incident occurred at Kammasandra in the Hebbagodi police limits on Saturday afternoon. The deceased boys, Ishaq (9) and Junaid (6), were studying in Class 2 and UKG at government schools. The injured third child, Roshan (5), is an LKG student.

Khaseem attacked the boy between 1.15 pm and 1.30 pm when their parents were away at work. Though their grandmother usually stayed at home, on Saturday she had gone to collect her pension. Khaseem struck the three boys with an iron rod and stones, smashing their heads and private parts. When his mother returned, she found the door locked. She screamed and pleaded for it to be opened, but Khaseem did not respond. The neighbours then broke open the door and found two children lying in a pool of blood. The third child, who was critically injured, was rushed to the hospital, the police said.

The neighbours immediately called Namma 112 and a team rushed to the spot and arrested the accused. During questioning, Khaseem claimed that he attacked the children as his brother and sister-in-law were not taking proper care of him. The police also said Khaseem appeared to be mentally unstable. He will be produced before court and the police will seek his custody for further investigation, the police said.

PM MODI

INAUGURATES INFRA PROJECTS IN TN

The projects are related to airports, highways, railways, ports and power in Tamil Nadu, including a new Tuticorin airport terminal building, developed at a cost of around ₹450 crore | P5